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ABSTRACT

The "Rural America Guidance Series" of the National Center for Research in Vocational Education is a set of sixteen handbooks designed to help rural and small schools plan, develop, implement, and evaluate a career guidance and counseling program for grades K-14. It has been widely adopted by state departments, intermediate service agencies, and school districts across the country. The use and effects of the Series was studied in depth in the school district of Cashmere, Washington, (involving approximately 1,000 students) in December, 1979. Although Cashmere used only four of the sixteen handbooks of the Series, those that were used were key to planning the career guidance program. The handbooks provided a way to assess the career guidance needs of 250 students, to assess staff needs, and to establish a goal-setting process for the career guidance program. It was found during three days of in-depth interviews with twenty-five administrators, teachers, counselors and guidance coordinators, students, and parents that the "Rural America Series" had seven primary effects on Cashmere's career guidance program. In general, the users of "Rural America" recommended the Series for its completeness, general applicability, high quality, and its valuable use as an organizational tool. They also cited its compartmentalized organization and its ability to promote confidence in its users. As drawbacks, users specified the large amount of material, its poor readability, the intensiveness of the training, and the Series' bulky packaging. Four recommendations for the National Center and two recommendations for the users of the materials were made at the conclusion of the study. (KC)

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CAN RESEARCH IMPROVE CAREER GUIDANCE PROGRAMS IN RURAL SCHOOLS?

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U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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The National Center for Research in Vocational Education's mission is to increase the ability of diverse agencies, institutions, and organizations to solve educational problems relating to individual career planning, preparation, and progression. The National Center fulfills its mission by:

- Generating knowledge through research
- Developing educational programs and products
- Evaluating individual program needs and outcomes
- Providing information for national planning and policy
- Installing educational programs and products
- Operating information systems and services
- Conducting leadership development and training programs

FOREWORD

A series of studies have been undertaken to explore the effects of research conducted by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education. We are interested in learning more about how our research efforts influence thinking and practice in vocational education.

Dr. Kay A. Adams, Coordinator of National Center Evaluation, was responsible for conceptualizing and initiating the studies. Thanks are extended to her staff, Dr. William Hull, Ms. Jean Anderson, Ms. Laura Modisette, and Ms. Brenda MacKay, for their involvement in conducting the studies. To enhance objectivity and credibility, external contractors were used as team members in conducting the evaluation studies. We appreciate the work of Dr. Michael Patton, Minnesota Center for Social Research, and Ms. Deborah G. Bonnet, New Educational Directions.

Thanks are extended to all the staff at the field sites who participated in these studies. A special note of appreciation is extended to each of the following: Dr. Richard A. Adamsky, Dr. Glen E. Fardig, Department of Vocational Education, University of Central Florida; Ms. Bernie Griffith, Cashmere Public Schools; and Dr. Alice E. Kudlata, Milwaukee Public Schools.

Dr. Robert E. Taylor
Executive Director
The National Center for Research
in Vocational Education

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SUMMARY

The original *Rural America Guidance Series* is a set of sixteen handbooks designed to help rural and small schools plan, develop, implement, and evaluate a career guidance and counseling program for grades K-14. The *Series* developed by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education (1977) has been widely adopted by state departments, intermediate service agencies, and school districts across the country.

Distribution

Between April 1977 and December 1979, a total of 25,836 *Rural America* handbooks have been purchased throughout the United States and by foreign nations. Most of these handbooks (24,256 handbooks or 77 percent) were purchased as complete sets. Based on the time period April 1, 1977 through December 1979, the *Rural America Series* is the best selling career development product developed by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education. The primary purchasers of the materials have been state departments of education who have purchased 52 percent of all handbooks sold. The twelve largest geographic purchasers of the *Series,* Washington, Iowa, Florida, Kansas, California, Idaho, Washington, D.C., Arkansas, West Virginia, Mississippi, Ohio, and the National Center itself, accounted for 96 percent of total sales.

The state of Washington is the largest geographic purchaser of the *Series.* Its state department of education and state advisory council for vocational and career education purchased a set of the *Series* for each of the 324 school districts in the state. Washington also selected a cadre of twenty persons to train the individual schools in its use.

Use

The use and effects of the *Series* was studied in-depth in one school district in December 1979. This district in Cashmere, Washington was one of the first users of the *Rural America Series.* Cashmere, a district of approximately 1,000 students, was one of nine national field test sites for the materials in the fall of 1977. Cashmere has a long and important history in the area of career education and career guidance. Since 1972, a strong, nationally-recognized career education program has evolved and Cashmere has been in the forefront of helping other schools develop their own programs. In 1976, Cashmere chose an Advisor/Advisee program as the most effective method of delivering career guidance to its students. It was with the development of this program that the usefulness of the *Rural America Series* was recognized.

Although Cashmere used only four of the sixteen handbooks of the *Series,* those that were used were key to planning the career guidance program. The handbooks specifically provided a way to assess the career guidance needs of 250 students, to assess staff needs, and to establish a goal-setting process for the career-guidance program. Cashmere staff have also conducted *Rural America* orientation sessions for other school districts throughout the state of Washington. Based on its use in Cashmere, the *Rural America Series* is a useful organizational and process tool in the area of career guidance. Even a school district with the experience in career education of Cashmere found a very definite need for the Series.

Effects

It was found during three days of in-depth interviews with twenty-five administrators, teachers, counselors and guidance coordinators, students, and parents that the *Rural America Series* had seven primary effects on Cashmere's career guidance program. These effects are (1) defined student career guidance needs based on empirical test data; (2) identified the ten middle school and fifteen high school goals for the career guidance program that were based on student and community needs data; (3) provided a framework that lent continuity and cohesion to the career guidance planning effort; (4) strengthened techniques for assessing staff needs in delivering career guidance and providing staff development; (5) increased support of the career guidance program as evidenced by a reduction in community opposition during its planning; (6) enhanced the program planners' self-confidence in their career guidance skills; and (7) enhanced the Cashmere School District's leadership role in training staff in career guidance across the state. The career guidance program had two primary effects on students (1) increased students' and their parents' personal communication with teachers and (2) developed students' core values for productive work habits.

Appraisal

The users of *Rural America* generally recommended the *Series* due to its completeness, general applicability, high quality, and its valuable use as an organizational tool. They also cited its compartmentalized organization and its ability to promote confidence in its users. As drawbacks, users specified the large amount of material, its poor readability, the intensiveness of the training and the *Series'* bulky packaging. Generally, the materials' most mentioned strength (completeness) and weakness (overwhelming volume) stem from the same condition, *Rural America's* size.

CHAPTER I

OVERVIEW OF THE PRODUCT

The *Rural America Series* has been a widely-distributed series of career guidance materials. The *Series* is a set of handbooks designed to help rural and small schools plan, develop, implement, and evaluate a career guidance and counseling program for grades K-14. The *Series* is not for student use, nor does it prescribe a career guidance program. Rather, it is a step-by-step guide for use by educational planners in designing their own programs. The *Rural America Series* identifies the following as crucial elements to effective rural career guidance programming:

1. Community and postsecondary involvement to supplement limited K-12 resources.
2. A designated program coordinator.
3. Systematic assessments of local needs and resources.
4. Written program goals.

The *Series* sixteen handbooks, divided into the four areas of program support information, program process steps, guidance and counseling for groups and individuals, and program support functions, focus on these elements and provide a comprehensive set of tools for achieving them.

The development of the *Rural America Series* was influenced by several research efforts. Early research conducted by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education revealed that schools were trying "to provide more guidance services than they could effectively deliver with available resources" (Campbell, 1968). In response to this need, the Career Planning Support System (CPSS) was developed at the National Center between 1971 and 1976. While working with the CPSS materials, it was found that the limited resources typically found in rural schools presented unique challenges to career guidance programming. The *Rural America Series,* similar in intent to CPSS, was developed in 1975-77 to meet the special needs of these schools. The *Series* was developed by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education in cooperation with the Wisconsin Vocational Studies Center and Northern Michigan University with support from the U.S. Office of Education, Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education, under Part C of the Vocational Education Act of 1963, as amended. Development of *Rural America* cost approximately $385,000.

The *Rural America Series* was field tested in nine rural school districts in nine states during 1977-78. The findings and recommendations generated from this testing resulted in a supplement to the *Rural America Series* entitled *From Idea to Action.* This book presents case studies of the field tests and offers the actual test results, problems, and plans of the school districts involved. Most recently in the research effort, the National Center has produced an eighteen module and supplement series, Facilitator's Guide, to train staff in the use of the *Rural America Series.* The Guide was developed from the training and workshops given by the National Center staff during the early use of the *Rural America Series.*

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to document the impact of the *Rural America Series* and to discover the key features which have led to its wide acceptance. Impact is conceived as a multidimensional concept including the distribution, use, effects, appraisal, and generalizability of the *Series*. The six study questions presented below are organized around these five dimensions.

Distribution

1. To what extent has the *Rural America Series* been distributed across the U.S.?

Use

2. How are rural school districts using the *Series?*

Effects

3. How has the *Series* affected teachers, students, and the community as well as career guidance systems in rural school districts?

Appraisal

4. What are the problems and weaknesses of the *Series?*

5. What are the strengths and benefits of the *Series?*

Generalizability

6. What can be learned from the *Series* for increasing the success of other R&D efforts?

Naturalistic Case Study Methodology

The primary technique used to collect data about the use and effects of the *Rural America Series* was case study methodology using naturalistic inquiry techniques. A case study was conducted in one setting which was considered to be an exemplary user of the Series. This case was studied in-depth on-site so that the use and effects of the *Series* could be fully understood. Open-ended, flexible measuring devices were used rather than prestructured instruments. The primary data collection tool was in-depth, open-ended personal interviews supplemented by observation and examination of records. Triangulation among various data sources (e.g., records, interviews, and observation) and among different respondents was used to assure the accuracy of the information.

Case Study Site

The site selected for the *Rural America* case study was the Cashmere Public Schools, Cashmere, Washington. This site was considered to be the "best site" using the *Series* for the following reasons:

1. Cashmere's involvement with the *Rural America Series* since it participated in the field tests in 1977-78.

2. The commitment of the school district to career education and guidance and its continued involvement in these areas.

Site Visit Team

A site visit team of two evaluators visited Cashmere, Washington. The site team included an external consultant, Ms. Deborah G. Bonnet, the director of Research and Evaluation Programs for New Educational Directions, Inc. in Crawfordsville, Indiana; and one National Center staff member, Ms. Laura J. Modisette a member of the National Center Evaluation Team. The team was comprised of both an internal and external member to enhance both the familiarity and the credibility of the study endeavor.

Site Visit Agenda

The site visit team spent three days on-site conducting interviews. People were interviewed at Vale Elementary School, the Cashmere Middle School, and at Cashmere High School. Interviews were conducted with administrators (the superintendent, a school board member, and the principals), teachers (from all three schools), counselors and guidance coordinators, students, and parents. In all, twenty-five individuals were interviewed during the three days.

Most of the interviews were individual ones. Group interviews were held with students, parents, and one group of teachers. The study team talked with both advocates and adversaries of the program, though program opponents were difficult to find. (One adversary refused to be interviewed.) Longer interviews were held with those who were deeply involved in the program, "key informants." In fact, one key informant was interviewed three times to achieve better understanding of the total program. In addition to the interviews, two guidance classes were observed; both of these were in the Middle School.

Some school records and documents were also examined by the team while it was on-site. These documents include students' needs assessment test results, specific school and class goals and objectives, parents' comments concerning the guidance program, internal evaluation reports, and career guidance and education curriculum guides developed by the school district.

Supplementary Data

Distribution and other background data were compiled from several sources. Distribution data were obtained from the National Center Career Development Marketing Report and through the National Center Information System. Background information on the development and dissemination of the *Rural America* materials was obtained primarily through interviews with two of the product's developers, Ms. Karen K. Kimmel and Ms. Val Axelrod. Other information was secured from the supplementary book, *From Idea to Action,* and from one of the Cashmere School District's works, *The Original American Morning Primer.*

CHAPTER II

NATIONAL DISTRIBUTION

The following data on the distribution of the original *Rural America Series* handbooks (sixteen handbooks) was obtained from the National Center Career Development Marketing Report. This report analyzed career deve'opment products generated by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education and sold during the period from April 1, 1977, when the products were first available for purchase, through June 30, 1979. Some supplementary data, obtained through the National Center Information System for the period July through December, 1979, is also included.

Volume Distributed

Between April 1977 and June 1979, 25,836 individual *Rural America* handbooks were distributed. (If the *Rural America* supplementary books are included, total distribution becomes 31,500 handbooks.) This figure includes 1,502 complete sets (sixteen handbooks per set) of the handbooks. In fact, complete sets account for 93 percent of all of the handbooks sold during this period. During the period July 1979 through December 1979, 336 handbooks were sold; 224 handbooks or 67 percent of total sales were purchased as complete sets.

The sales of the *Rural America Series* can also be compared with the sales of other career development products developed at the National Center for Research in Vocational Education. In the time period under discussion (April 1977 to June 1979), the *Series* accounted for 72 percent of all product sales on the topic of career development.

Type of Agencies Involved

The total sales of the *Series* in the United States between April 1977 and June 1979, was 22,813 handbooks (excluding books purchased by the National Center itself). The breakdown of these total sales by type of purchaser is found in table 1.

As can be seen from table 1, by far the largest purchasers of the *Rural America* materials are state departments of education who purchased 52 percent of all handbooks sold. State departments are followed by individual schools and school districts who are a distant second with 18 percent of total sales.

TABLE 1

Type of Purchaser
United States

Agency	Number	Percentage
State Departments	11,953	52
Individual School Districts	4,056	18
Intermediate/County Districts	2,207	10
Higher Education Institutions	1,585	7
U.S. Department of Labor	1,204	5
Postsecondary Institutions	711	3
Individuals (Personal)	545	2
Business/Industry/Labor	307	1
Others	163	1
Libraries	82	1

Distribution by Geographic Area

Of all *Rural America* handbooks sold during the designated time period, only twenty-seven were sold internationally and 183 handbooks were sold in the trust territories. Almost 3,000 handbooks were sold within the National Center itself. As mentioned before, 22,813 books were sold within the United States. The twelve largest purchasers of the *Rural America Series* appear in table 2. The twelve poorest purchasers of the *Series* appear in table 3. The largest purchasers as a group account for 96 percent of total U.S. sales while the poorest group account for less than one percent of *Rural America's* U.S. sales.

TABLE 2

Largest Purchasers of the Rural America Series

	Agency or Purchaser	Number of Handbooks
1.	Washington	5,052
2.	Internal Sales	2,813
3.	Iowa	2,637
4.	Florida	2,461
5.	Kansas	1,473
6.	California	1,336
7.	Idaho	1,285
8.	Washington, D.C.	1,204
9.	Arkansas	1,176
10.	West Virginia	913
11.	Mississippi	809
12.	Ohio	659

TABLE 3

Poorest Purchasers of the Rural America Series

	Purchaser	Number of Handbooks
1.	Vermont	0
2.	Rhode Island	1
3.	Delaware	3
4.	Hawaii	4
5.	Montana	4
6.	Tennessee	4
7.	Wyoming	6
8.	Missouri	7
9.	Nevada	17
10.	Louisiana	18
11.	Maryland	18
12.	New Hampshire	18

Distribution in One State

As may be noted from table 2, the state of Washington is the largest geographic purchaser of the *Rural America* materials. This is due to the fact that the state department of education and the state advisory council for vocational and career education studied the *Series* and decided to adopt it as their system model for career guidance. The state purchased a set of the materials for each of the 324 rural and urban districts in Washington. Additionally, a state training cadre of persons was organized and they have helped to install the *Series* in over 280 schools. As of December 1979, the cadre had provided training and technical assistance to over 2,800 persons in the state.

Summary

The *Rural America Series* is the best selling National Center career development product with 72 percent of these total sales. Between April 1977 and December 1979, a total of 26,172 handbooks have been purchased throughout the United States and by foreign nations. The largest agency purchasers of the *Series* have been state departments of education; the twelve largest geographic purchasers account for 96 percent of total *Rural America* sales. Washington state is the largest geographic purchaser of the materials having purchased a set for each school district in the state.

CHAPTER III

USE IN ONE SETTING

Setting

Cashmere, Washington

Located in the center of Washington state, Cashmere's 2,000 residents are surrounded by the foothills of the Cascade Mountain Range. The community's economic staple is the fruit orchards of the Wenatchee Valley; its best-known "product" is the apple. Cashmere supports little industry; its primary endeavors are fruit packing and fruit storage warehouses and the Aplets and Cotlets candy factory.

The Cashmere School District consists of three schools: Vale Elementary (K-4), the Middle School (5-8), and the High School (9-12). K-2 are self-contained classes, grades 3-6 are team taught and grades 7-12 are departmentalized. Total K-12 enrollment is about 1,000 students and the staff of fifty-nine includes a fulltime career education coordinator, a high school guidance counselor, and half-time guidance coordinators in the Middle and High Schools. In spite of its size, the Cashmere School District is well known for its career education and career guidance programs. As a local brochure asserts, "Cashmere has a reputation as a school district "on the move."

Implementation

Cashmere first became involved with the *Rural America* materials in February 1977, when it was invited to participate in the field testing of the *Series.* In the spring of the same year, two of the school's staff (the high school guidance counselor and the librarian) participated in a training session in Columbus, Ohio. However, the *Rural America Series* was not actually used until the fall of 1977 when Cashmere received technical assistance from the National Center for Research in Vocational Education staff. Cashmere completed the testing of some of the materials in 1978 and was included in the case study book, *From Idea to Action* (discussed on page 2 of the report).

Reasons for Adopting Rural America

Before one can discuss the actual use of the *Rural America* materials, it is necessary to examine the development of Cashmere's nationally-recognized career education and guidance programs. The implementation of *Rural America* can only be understood within the context of Cashmere's on-going programs. Career education started in 1972 when three team teachers, including the current coordinators of career education and middle school guidance, started experimenting with career education activities in their fourth grade classrooms. The interest and enthusiasm generated by this experiment led to a two-week workshop for K-8 teachers and the following summer, supported by state vocational education funds. This in turn led to more state and federal grants and contracts—

a total of seven since 1972, amounting to $596,000—three for developing Cashmere's own career education program and four for helping other schools do the same.

Career education itself profoundly changed Cashmere's curriculum planning process. The attempt to infuse career education into the curriculum led to an examination of what was being taught in Cashmere classrooms and to the development of curriculum guides for all disciplines and all grade levels. The development of career education and discipline objectives and the curriculum guides took three years—these were completed during the 1977-78 school year.

At the same time that career education and curriculum were being revised, guidance was also getting a boost. The annual school goal-setting process, which evolved from a career education advisory committee formed in 1973, held its first meeting in 1976, involved approximately 100 community people, and established guidance as the district's number one priority. Due to the constraints of the school—limited money and a counselor/student ratio of 1:400—this priority evolved into the Advisor/Advisee (A/A) program.

The A/A program establishes each middle school and high school teacher as an "advisor" to a group of approximately twenty students. Students have individual advisors for the duration of their stay in each school. The A/A groups meet every day and provide the opportunity for discussion, individual guidance, group projects, and parties. A Cashmere task force visited several A/A programs across the nation and picked up ideas it could use piecemeal. Planning began for the program during the 1976-77 school year and it was implemented the next year. It was during the development and early implementation of this Advisor/Advisee program that the *Rural America Series* appeared on the scene and Cashmere became a test site.

Cashmere agreed to be a test site because, "We thought it would be helpful in getting A/A off the ground." Because the 1977 community goal-setting group reaffirmed its interest in guidance, everyone in attendance was invited to participate on a guidance planning committee to reassess the A/A plans using the *Rural America Series*. (A/A implementation had begun in the fall of 1977). The planning committee met for three sessions and part of the *Rural America* materials and processes were used to clarify A/A's goals based on community priorities and student needs and to update the community resource file.

Program Operations

Specifically, Cashmere used only four of the sixteen handbooks in the *Rural America Series.* The Career Development Needs Assessment handbook was used most extensively and with the greatest fidelity. As suggested in the handbook, a variety of community factions was represented in the goal-setting process. The guidance planning committee voted on the handbook's twenty-six "primary goals" in setting priority outcomes and the handbook's student tests were administered in their entirety to a twenty-five percent sample of the students. Cashmere's top priority guidance goals then became those that were considered important by the planning committee and where students' achievement was relatively low. A retesting of students is planned in the spring of 1980.

The Staff Development handbook included a needs assessment instrument which was adapted for use in planning a staff development program in guidance for teachers and counselors. The Community Relations and Involvement handbook was used in conducting a community resources survey by mail. This survey elicited little response, primarily because in Cashmere's informal atmosphere, community members are accustomed to communicating in person. However, the poor response rate was not critical because the survey was intended only as an update of an extensive file developed earlier through the career education program.

The State of the Art Review handbook was helpful to the career education and middle school guidance coordinators, particularly in defining and distinguishing among career education, career development, and career guidance concepts. They also consulted the other twelve handbooks occasionally—like a set of encyclopedias—and borrowed ideas and activities from them.

Finally, the Cashmere School District was sufficiently impressed with the *Rural America Series* to recommend that the Washington State Department of Education purchase the *Series* for every district in the state and this was done. Districts must participate in a *Rural America* orientation session in order to secure the materials; about 280 schools have done this so far. Cashmere staff have conducted four such sessions lasting from two hours to two days. They have found the *Series* as applicable to urban areas as the rural communities. Whenever they conduct workshops, whether in or out of state, the career education and middle school guidance coordinators "always bring up *Rural America,* A/A , the Northwest Connection, and career education." They estimate that they have exposed at least 400 people to the *Rural America Series* in this way.

Program Staff and Participants

The use and implementation of the *Rural America* materials and the planning of the Advisor/Advisee program fell primarily on the following three staff members:

1. Career Education/Curriculum Coordinator—spends 100 percent of her time on all aspects of career education and curriculum development. She was one of the two people who headed the testing of the *Rural America* materials in Cashmere. She was also one of the group who recommended that the state of Washington purchase the *Rural America Series* for every school district in the state.

2. Middle School Guidance Coordinator—spends 50 percent of her time writing and coordinating the guidance activities in the middle school. She co-ordinated the use of the *Rural America* materials in Cashmere and is on the state training cadre for training other school districts in the use of the *Rural America Series.*

3. High School Guidance Coordinator—spends 50 percent of her time writing and coordinating the guidance activities in the middle school. She co-coordinated the use of the *Rural America* materials in Cashmere and is on the state training cadre for training other school districts in the use of the *Rural America Series.*

3. High School Guidance Coordinator—spends 50 percent of her time writing and coordinating the high school's guidance activites, with support from the high school guidance counselor. She received training in the use of the *Rural America Series* as one of the two people sent to Columbus, Ohio for the field test training.

Other school and community members also participated in the implementation of the *Rural America* process. These groups are as follows:

1. Students—Approximately 250 middle and high school students (a 25 percent sample) took the students needs tests. These tests identified those areas where students' achievement was low and where effort was needed.

2. The Community—Thirty-nine people participated in the three meetings of the guidance planning committee to choose Cashmere's top priority goals. An unidentified number of community members also received the community resources survey.

3. The Staff—The teaching staff of the middle and high schools completed the staff development needs assessment questionnaire to ascertain those areas where staff needed training. Some inservice training was provided for the middle school staff based on the test results.

CHAPTER IV

EFFECTS IN ONE SETTING

A major focus of the interviews with the twenty-five administrators, teachers, students, and parents of the Cashmere School District was to determine the various effects of the *Rural America Series,* particularly effects on Cashmere's career guidance program. The interviews revealed seven effects of the materials; these effects are discussed below.

Effects of Rural America on the School District

Better defined and substantiated goals for the A/A program. The *Rural America Series* helped the Cashmere Schools to define the goals of its infant A/A program. Before the *Rural America* materials were implemented in Cashmere, the community had already identified guidance as a top priority, the Advisor/Advisee approach had been chosen, the program had been planned, and implementation had begun. With the arrival of the *Rural America* materials, Cashmere "backed up and replanned" the A/A program, paying particular attention to the program's goals. The school's career guidance planners presented *Rural America's* twenty-six primary goals to the guidance planning committee, and the committee voted on these to set its priority goals. The coordinators of career education and middle school guidance, the leaders of the *Rural America* process, felt that this was beneficial to the implementation of the A/A program:

> It gave us better direction. We had goals before, but afterward they were better defined, better formatted to meet the needs of kids. We had a reason for our goals.

The ten middle school and fifteen high school goals for A/A established through the *Rural America* planning process are still in use. Those in the middle school will undergo a reevaluation in 1980-81.

Improved organization of the A/A program. This effect appears to be a natural correlate of the first, better defined goals. The coordinators of career education and guidance felt that the *Rural America* materials provided a framework as well as a process for implementing the A/A program. As one of the coordinators explained, "It helped us make the program more organized and comprehensive, as things fit together better and we weren't leaving anything out." Another principal participant said, "Without the *Rural America Series* we would have gotten to where we are, but by using the materials and working with Harry (Drier) we saved time and made fewer mistakes."

Generally then, the coordinators felt that the organization and interrelatedness of the various *Rural America* components provided continuity and cohesion to the A/A planning efforts.

More clearly defined student needs. To find out what students really needed in terms of career education and guidance, Cashmere administered the complete student needs test from the

Rural America Series to about 250 students. Students tested well in knowledge and comprehension, but relatively low scores in application confirmed the need for a guidance component to career education. The need for greater emphasis on decision-making skills was also identified. As one member of the staff said, "This is good information to know. Before we were just guessing about what kids needed. Now we know more about what they really need."

Those areas in which students showed a need were matched with the priority goals chosen by the planning committee and these "top priority" goals became the ones for the A/A program. In this way, more clearly defined student needs were linked with goals to better plan the guidance program.

Increased community support of the A/A program. In Cashmere, it was found that the use of "professional materials" in the planning of the A/A program helped to sell the program to some members of the community. One administrator related the anecdote of how some isolated parental negativism died down after a few of these parents came to a planning committee meeting and saw the materials *(Rural America Series)* being used. This administrator felt that the *Rural America Series* was a "good vehicle to use with the community; (it was) usable to get them off of the ground, (to) get over the initial hurdle."

Effects of Rural America on the Staff

Strengthened techniques for assessing staff needs and providing staff development. Cashmere administered *Rural America's* staff development needs questionnaire to determine the skills that the staff felt they needed to be part of a career guidance program. From this survey the planners were able to design inservice training to meet some of the staff's needs. The A/A planning group also "used some material in the *(Rural America)* training modules" in their training sessions. This material included module formats, terminology, ideas for workshops, and references. Though Cashmere's planning staff had previously been involved with presenting and attending workshops, they found the *Rural America* materials helped them to better assess the needs and provide development for their own staff.

Enhanced self-confidence in the career guidance program's planners. The planners of the A/A program felt increased confidence in themselves as guidance planners due to working with the *Rural America* materials. This feeling seems equally attributable to the presence of one of the materials' developers, Harry Drier, as well as to the quality of the materials themselves. Drier's visit was particularly important to the coordinators of career education and middle school guidance: "We really felt inadequate, especially since neither of us had a guidance background. Talking with Harry (Drier of the National Center Staff) and going through the materials gave us more confidence. It was a real course for me."

It seems that the quality and professionalism of the materials contributed to the knowledge and confidence of the planners in much the same way that it changed the attitudes of some community members. However, the support given by the National Center staff cannot be underestimated.

Enhanced the Cashmere School District's leadership role in staff training. Cashmere's staff has conducted four *Rural America* orientation sessions lasting from two hours to two days, has mentioned the *Series* in many workshops, and estimates that it has exposed at least 400 people to the materials. The use of the materials, and particularly the *Rural America* orientation sessions, have served to enhance the already-recognized training role of Cashmere's staff.

Generally, Cashmere's staff is well-known for its training role. As one administrator explained, "The faculty are also asked more than others (other schools) to perform outside." He pointed out that the high school staff alone serves as an outside resource in the areas of athletics, distributive education, career education, guidance, agriculture, and assertive discipline.

Effects of the Career Guidance Program on Students

Besides the primary effects of the *Rural America Series,* there are also effects of the career guidance program, A/A. These effects may be seen as secondary but related to the direct ones. Both of the secondary effects directly concern students; they are discussed below.

Increased students' and their parents' personal communication with teachers. Giving students and parents a "contact with the school" was the A/A benefit mentioned by virtually everyone interviewed at the Cashmere School. Staff, parents, and even the students felt that A/A had increased communication and reduced the number and severity of student problems in the district.

A/A appears to put school discussions on a friendlier basis than in the past and encourages both parent and student contact with school staff.

Almost all communication between the school and parents is done through the A/A advisor. A recent parent conference with A/A advisors in Cashmere resulted in a record-breaking turnout of over 90 percent in both the middle and high schools. One parent commented in a survey conducted at the time of the conference, "A/A keeps me informed as to my child's progress and is an easy access to someone to help handle problems." The school board president explained, "If (as a parent) you have to talk to the principal, you're in big trouble. Calling your kid's advisor isn't such a drastic step; it's more friendly."

Finally, the A/A advisor is a student's contact, confidant and even defender within the school system. As one teacher pointed out, "With an advisor, students have someone to represent themselves, their point of view. An advisor intercedes for the students. They get information, contact other teachers. They take that initial step (for students) so they don't have to feel uncomfortable." One student explained, "A/A forces you into getting to know a teacher. If I can get to know (my advisor) this well, I know I can get to know I can get to know other teachers, too. I can not only talk to her; I can even argue with her. It's like a family situation."

Developed students' core values for productive work habits. The A/A groups helped to promote proper school conduct, group cooperation, and personal self-confidence. School issues such as proper conduct at basketball games and the correct way to display the flag are discussed in A/A groups rather than in large groups. Peer pressure is employed in a positive way, particularly in the middle school. As one administrator said, "Eighth graders feel responsible for the younger students who look up to them, so they lead the discussion to the 'correct' conclusion about how they should act." The high school principal pointed out that, "An advisor saying 'don't break windows' is more effective than a principal saying the same thing."

The A/A program also encouraged group cooperation across age groups and limited grade segregation. In the middle school there is "no more intimidation of sixth graders by eight graders." In the high school "competition among classes is being replaced by competition among A/A groups." A parent noticed that her son has more friends of different ages than his older siblings did in high school. According to a sophomore, "A/A brings students closer together. Just being able to talk to an upperclassman makes you feel more comfortable here.

Finally, the A/A program seemed to promote self-confidence and good social skills. One parent's comment that A/A "seems to be building my daughter's self-confidence" was supported by students and school staff. One student observed, "In A/A I've gotten to know some shy people who turned out to be really neat. They have a lot to offer, but they have to be drawn out. I don't know whether we would have taken the time to do it if it weren't for A/A." A middle school parent summed the program up this way, "It is a good transitory program—introduces social contacts (class activities, parties, etc.) in a familiar and friendly environment."

CHAPTER V

APPRAISAL

The following quotes highlight some of the *Rural America Series* strengths and weaknesses as cited by the users in Cashmere. The most commonly-mentioned strength and weakness of the materials are flip sides of the same coin: *Rural America's* size. Virtually everyone involved with the materials identified both their completeness and their overwhelming volume.

Strengths

Complete. "(The materials) have everything, are so detailed I use them as a reference encyclopedia."

"I find something new every time I go through them."

"The content is great, but they're so mind boggling . . . there's so much . . . like everything anyone's ever thought of."

Applicable anywhere. "Rural is the name just because that's where the funding was coming from. The philosophy is definitely good for anyone. (It's) the best that's out right now."

Organizational tool. "It gave us better direction. We had goals before, but afterward they were better defined, better formatted to meet the needs of kids. We had a reason for our goals."

"It helped us make the program more organized and comprehensive, as things fit together better and we weren't leaving anything out."

High quality and credible. "(The *Series* was a) good vehicle to use with the community; (it was) usable to get them off of the ground, (to) get over the initial hurdle."

"Some isolated parental negativism toward A/A died down when they found out we were using 'professional materials' to plan the program."

Compartmentalized. "I pull sections to use, (I) know they're here."

Promotes confidence. "We really felt inadequate, especially since neither of us had a guidance background. Talking with Harry and going through the materials gave us more confidence. It was a real course for me. The use of *Rural America's* program and ideas 'gave me more confidence' in designing the A/A program."

Weaknesses

Too much material. "(It was) overwhelming, mind boggling."

"(There is a) tremendous amount of material there."

"(The trainers) make a joke of (the volume of materials) and show people how to use them as a reference."

"Training is needed for motivation. A person could go through them and use them effectively on their own. But the reason they're looking for something in the first place is that they don't have time to develop their own materials, so you can't expect people to take a lot of time to sift through these to find what they need."

Poor readability. "Very difficult reading."

"I tend not to read them. If (they were) simpler, I would read them."

When the guidance planning committee was discussing the goals found in the *Rural America* materials, the Cashmere staff said they felt "embarrassed" because they knew that the goals' abstruseness made some members of the group feel "inferior." As one staff member said, "Does everything coming out of Ohio State have to read like a thesis?!"

Training too intensive. "It was hectic, overwhelming, too much to wade through to get to the good ideas."

"They worked us from eight to five, then assigned homework. By two o'clock in the afternoon I felt absolutely drained."

"By the end of it, we didn't care if we ever saw those books again."

Bulky packaging. One of the users said that the big notebooks are "too bulky" and "could be a boxed encyclopedia."

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The *Rural America Series* has been widely-adopted by state departments, intermediate service agencies, and school districts across the country. The original *Series* sixteen handbooks are designed to help rural and small schools plan, develop, implement, and evaluate a career guidance and counseling program for grades K-14.

Distribution. Between April 1977 and December 1979, a total of 25,836 *Rural America* handbooks have been purchased throughout the United States and by foreign nations. Most of these handbooks (24,256 handbooks or 77 percent) were purchased as complete sets. Based on the time period April 1, 1977 through December 1979 the *Rural America Series* is the best selling career development product developed by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education. The primary purchasers of the materials have been state departments of education who have purchased 52 percent of all handbooks sold. The twelve largest geographic purchasers of the *Series*, Washington, Iowa, Florida, Kansas, California, Idaho, Washington, D.C., Arkansas, West Virginia, Mississippi, Ohio, and the National Center itself, accounted for 96 percent of total sales.

The state of Washington is the largest geographic purchaser of the *Series*. Its state department of education and state advisory council for vocational and career education purchased a set of the *Series* for each of the 324 school districts in the state. Washington also selected a cadre of twenty persons to train the individual schools in its use.

Use. The use and effects of the *Series* was studied in-depth in one school district in December 1979. This district in Cashmere, Washington was one of the first users of the *Rural America Series* Cashmere, a district of approximately 1,000 students, was one of nine national field test sites for the materials in the fall of 1977. Cashmere has a long and important history in the area of career education and career guidance. Since 1972, a strong, nationally-recognized career education program has evolved and Cashmere has been in the forefront of helping other schools develop their own programs. In 1976, Cashmere chose an Advisor/Advisee program as the most effective method of delivering career guidance to its students. It was with the development of this program that the usefulness of the *Rural America Series* was recognized.

Although Cashmere used only four of the sixteen handbooks of the *Series*, those that were used were key to planning the career guidance program. The handbooks specifically provided a way to assess the career guidance needs of 250 students, to assess staff needs, and to establish a goal-setting process for the career-guidance program. Cashmere staff have also conducted *Rural America* orientation sessions for other school districts throughout the state of Washington. Based on its use in Cashmere, the *Rural America Series* is a useful organizational and process tool in the area of career guidance. Even a school district with the experience in career education of Cashmere found a very definite need for the *Series*.

Effects. It was found during three days of in-depth interviews with twenty-five administrators, teachers, counselors and guidance coordinators, students, and parents that the *Rural America Series* had seven primary effects on Cashmere's career guidance program. These effects are: (1) defined student career guidance needs based on empirical test data; (2) identified the ten middle school and fifteen high school goals for the career guidance program that were based on student and community needs data; (3) provided a framework that lent continuity and cohesion to the career guidance planning effort; (4) strengthened techniques for assessing staff needs in delivering career guidance and providing staff development; (5) increased support of the career guidance program as evidenced by a reduction in community opposition during its planning; (6) enhanced the program planners' self-confidence in their career guidance skills; and (7) enhanced the Cashmere School District's leadership role in training staff in career guidance across the state. The career guidance program had two primary effects on students: (1) increased students' and their parents' personal communication with teachers and (2) developed students' core values for productive work habits.

Appraisal. The users of *Rural America* generally recommended the *Series* due to its completeness, general applicability, high quality, and its valuable use as an organizational tool. They also cited its compartmentalized organization and its ability to promote confidence in its users. As drawbacks, users specified the large amount of material, its poor readability, the intensiveness of the training and the *Series* bulky packaging. Generally the materials most mentioned strength (completeness) and weakness (overwhelming volume) stem from the same condition, *Rural America's* size.

Conclusions

1. Based on the time period April 1, 1977 through December 1979, the *Rural America Series* is the best selling career development product developed by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education.

2. Based on its use in Cashmere, the *Rural America Series* is a very useful organizational and process tool in the area of career guidance. Even a school district with the sophistication of Cashmere found a very definite need for this tool.

3. Based on its use in Cashmere, there is evidence that the *Rural America Series* can increase community support for a school's programs. The materials provide a starting point and impetus and lend credibility to the school's program.

4. Based on its use in Cashmere, there is evidence that the comprehensiveness and quality of the *Rural America Series* serve to enhance the self-confidence of its users. This is particularly useful in school districts where the staff have little previous experience in the guidance area.

Recommendations

For the National Center

1. Since the levels of expertise of the people in the field vary greatly, it is recommended that the writing level and style of future products be kept as simple and clear as possible. The highly technical level and style of writing used with the *Rural America Series* was a common

complaint at Cashmere and led to some embarrassment among the staff members. Such feelings of inadequacy could prohibit potential users from purchasing and/or using such technical materials.

2. Since training is necessary when using an extensive product like the *Rural America Series*, it is recommended that the training be as simple and nondemanding as possible. The two staff members who received formal *Rural America* training remarked about its intensiveness and appeared to suffer from overload.

3. Since the presence of National Center staff in the field was critical to the use of the materials, it is recommended that staff well-trained in the use of *Rural America* and like products always be available to provide support in the field. It appears that the National Center staff member's knowledge as well as his psychological support in Cashmere was very important to the successful use of the *Rural America Series*.

4. Since the bulk of the materials contained in the *Rural America Series* was often "overwhelming" to the people who were using it and since the product seems to meet both the need for a process handbook and the need for a reference encyclopedia, it is recommended that such products be organized along these two functions. A handbook series would be written containing only the "bare bones" process information while the remaining information would be organized like a reference work. Such an organization of the product should encourage use of the handbooks while providing the wealth of information that the users appreciated having available.

For the User

1. Since the *Rural America Series* is an extensive and highly technical work, it is recommended that any staff using this product be required to receive training. A user may receive training directly from National Center staff or may use the Facilitator's Guide approach.

2. Since the *Rural America Series* appears to be especially effective when used as a process tool, it is recommended that it be used when implementing more substantive career guidance innovations.

APPENDIX A

Rural America Guidance Series, by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1977.*

A. *Career Guidance Program Support Information Documents*

1. State of the Art Review
2. Life Role Development Model
3. Career Guidance Resources

B. *Career Guidance Program Process Handbooks*

1. Planning and Implementation
2. Career Development Needs Assessment
3. Behavioral Objectives
4. Resource Assessment
5. Deciding Via Evaluation

C. *Career Guidance and Counseling for Groups and Individuals*

1. Career Counseling in the Rural School
2. Desk Reference: Facilitating Career Counseling and Placement
3. An Individualized Approach to Career Counseling and Placement
4. Transitional Career Placement in the Rural School
5. Career Guidance Practices

D. *Career Guidance Program Support Functions Handbooks*

1. Staff Development
2. Community Relations and Involvement
3. Rural Community Perspective Toward Career Development

*Contact Harry N. Drier for additional information.